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The Philosophy of Don Hasdai Crescas. MEYER WAXMAN. Columbia University Oriental Studies, Vol. XVII. New York: Columbia University Press. 1920. Pp. 162.

Crescas was a Jewish philosopher of Spain who lived in the 14th century (1340–1410). He rendered himself famous particularly for his antagonism to the philosophical current of his time, which was primarily peripatetic. Many were the Jewish Rabbis who fought against the introduction of Aristotle into Judaism. But they were not philosophers; they combatted Aristotle from the standpoint of religion and tradition. Crescas waged the battle on purely technical grounds. He, too, was a philosopher; he made a careful study of Maimonides, Gersonides, and through them also of Aristotle.

In his monograph on Crescas's philosophy, Dr. Waxman unfolds before us Crescas's criticism of the chief Jewish peripatetics, Maimonides and Gersonides. Crescas criticized some Aristotelian conceptions, such as space, time and the infinite, and also attacked Maimonides's proof of the existence of God and the theory of attributes which embody the Aristotelian principles. He also shows that the Maimonidian solution of the problem of prescience and the possible falls because the foundation is undermined. Crescas finds still more fault with Gersonides for his radical departures from tradition regarding creation, eternity of the world, miracles, etc.

Along with his analysis of Crescas, Dr. Waxman brings to the surface whatever bears suggestion to Spinoza. He finds many points of contact between the two philosophers, but is greatly on his guard not to over-emphasize the comparisons—not a usual precaution for one engrossed in the search for sources. He would not ascribe to Crescas as large an influence as does Joel in his *Zur Genesis der Lehre Spinozas*; nor would he agree with Kuno Fischer who denies any relationship between Spinoza and his Jewish progenitors.

But what escaped the notice not only of Dr. Waxman, but of our historians as well, is the underlying identity between the philosophy of Crescas and that of Gersonides (1288–1344). This is particularly noteworthy since Crescas himself pretends to supersede Gersonides's erroneous system by his own. It was primarily to refute Gersonides's system and nullify his authority that Crescas was prompted to write his philosophical work *Or Adonai*. What brought Crescas on the one hand to fight Gersonides and on the other to adopt that very system as his own, with some modification of language only, is more than puzzling. Not less surprising is how Crescas succeeded in forcing his misinterpretation of Gersonides for the real meaning, and have the historians look upon him as the antipode of Gersonides. But here is not the place to discuss it. The writer

of this review will attempt to prove elsewhere¹ that contrary to all appearance, and in spite of striking differences, Crescas's system of philosophy is at bottom that of Gersonides, minus the heretical conclusions. Whenever Gersonides's conclusions are not sufficiently orthodox, Crescas rejects them arbitrarily without, however, modifying the fundamental premises. This explains the flaw in some of Crescas's reasonings, which our author calls attention to, but does not account for.

However, as much as this assumption regarding Crescas would put him in a different light, it does not necessarily modify the contents of his philosophy, so faithfully rendered in the present scholarly treatise. How difficult a task our author had before him will best be appreciated by those familiar with the complicated and obscure Hebrew text of Crescas's work, *Or Adonai (The Light of God)*. He has disentangled Crescas's leading ideas from a labyrinth of cumbersome and incidental details and presented them in a clear and pleasant style. It would have been desirable to have a special chapter devoted to the gist of Crescas's philosophy, which would have given us a more concentrated picture of the philosopher's mind. But Dr. Waxman has given us an excellent analysis and criticism of Crescas's philosophy; he points out several germs of modern thought in it, and has made, in addition, a notable contribution to the study of Spinoza's sources.

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NEW YORK.

JOURNALS AND NEW BOOKS

REVUE NEO-SCOLASTIQUE DE PHILOSOPHIE. February, 1921. *Le nominalisme de Guillaume Occam* (pp. 5-25): P. DONCEUR. — Occam denied relation any objective reality, and professed the strictest nominalism. He admitted, however, that his theory did not apply to God, in whom Paternity really exists. *Les thèmes du "Protagoras" et les "Dissoi Logoi"* (pp. 26-40): E. DUPREEL. — The doctrine which Socrates defends in the Protagoras is not Socratic, but comes from Protagoras. *Notes sur le Probabilisme* (pp. 41-58): P. HARMIGNIE. — There is nothing in the philosophy of St. Thomas against the doctrine of probabilism, which he ignored and was therefore unable to judge. *La formation du tempérament national dans les philosophes du XIIIe. siècle* (pp. 59-72): M. DE WULF. — The three characteristics of Western thought in the thirteenth century are individualism, intellectualism and moderation. German thought, on the other hand, is already inclined to

¹ In a monograph on Gersonides.